

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



THE LENEXA EDIFIER



John 8:32

"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"

APRIL 1, 2018

HEAVEN CAME DOWN

by Jim Stauffer

On this Easter weekend, I am reminded of two hymns we sing and the impact of their words on our hearts and lives.

The first is titled, Heaven Came Down, the first verse and chorus go as follows:

Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful day

Day I will never forget!

After I'd wandered in darkness away,

Jesus, my Savior I met.

Oh, what a tender compassionate Friend!

He met the need of my heart,

Shadows dispelling, with joy I am telling

He made all the darkness depart

The chorus:

Heaven came down and glory filled my soul

When at the Cross the Savior made me whole

My sins were washed away

And my night was turned to day

Heaven came down and glory filled my soul.

The second is titled, The Way of the Cross Leads Home. The first verse says this:

I must needs go home by the way of the cross

There's no other way but this:

I shall ne'er get sight of the Gates of Light

If the way of the cross I miss.

Jesus' instruction to any who would be His disciple was, *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. (Matt. 16:24)* The idea of following Jesus is to walk as He did and taught. This is illustrated by Paul's description of his own effort to walk in His steps, **2 Cor. 4:7** *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; 8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus,*

so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Paul makes a direct correlation between the death of Christ and the life He delivered for each of us if we choose to become His disciples. Paul in another place tells us we were dead in our sins because we walked according to the course of the world (**Eph. 2:1**). But then God in His mercy made us alive together with Christ (**Eph. 2:5**). Later in **verse 8** of that text we are told we are *saved by grace through faith*. Our salvation is how this new life came from our death due to sin. Again Paul explains this to us in **Rom. 6:3,4**, when he tells us we are baptized into the death of Christ and in the process we bury the old man of sin and are raised to walk in newness of life.

This is the point where we have chosen to become His disciples and take up our cross and follow Him. Now we have seen and understood how Heaven came down in the form of Jesus the Christ, took on flesh as we have, died on the cross so we can be redeemed from our sins.

The cross, while physically an ugly scene is a beautiful sight to the sinner who has no other hope of redemption. It is His blood that reconciles us to God, **Col. 1:19** *For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.* Only the Son of God was a sufficient sacrifice to purchase our souls from the bondage of sin. **1 Pet. 1:18** *knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.* All men are reconciled to God by being born of the water and the Spirit in the new birth (**2 Cor. 5:17-19**).

What a wonderful thing Christ has done for us. What a wonderful day it was when He shed His blood for our sins. What a wonderful day it is in the life of each person who comes to Christ and takes up his cross and follows Him.

It is Easter Sunday April 1, 2018. Many people will for the first time all year go to a house of worship in an effort to commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those people are not to be praised for that. They have not taken up their cross and followed Him. They do not honor Him the remaining days of the year. It is sad for them that for 364 days and 51 weeks out of the year they completely ignore Him.

To take up our cross and follow Him means we will pattern our lives after His **(Eph. 5:1,2)**. We will be committed to serving in His kingdom at every opportunity we have. That begins with worship regularly, each and every time the church assembles.

Consider the following verses as Peter tells us how we should conduct ourselves if we are following Christ. **1 Pet. 2:21** *For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

This is what it means to take up our cross and follow Christ. He came down from Heaven for us. Will we do what is necessary to go back to Heaven with Him when He returns in judgment of all men?

OCCASIONS OF STUMBLING

*“If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a huge millstone tied around his neck and to be thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off! It is better for you to enter into life crippled than to have two hands and go into hell, to the unquenchable fire where *Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:42-44).*

The disciples of Jesus, particularly the twelve, needed to understand the fact that Jesus would soon go to Jerusalem and die. His time was drawing near; His betrayers and His cross were waiting. Clearly knowing and being able to correctly identify Jesus as the Messiah was crucial to their future work as the Lord’s chosen ambassadors. But beyond the cross, beyond the resurrection, beyond Jesus’ eventual transition back to heaven, what would the apostles do? And importantly,

how would they act?

Seemingly, the apostles continued to think about an earthly kingdom, an overthrow of the Romans, and the soon to be kingdom of Jesus on earth. Surely, when that kingdom arrived, Jesus would need some well-placed advisors. This argument about greatness in the kingdom and where someone would sit occupied the minds of those who had been so very close to Jesus for three years. Jesus said please listen to Me: *“If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”* To cement His teaching, the Lord placed a little child before them and said: When you receive this little child in my name, you receive me and the one who sent me. You want to be great? Then put others before yourself, including even these little children, these little ones who hold little value in Roman society. There was more. If you want to be great, then go out and give a drink of water to those who are thirsty. This is your throne of service; this is your display of greatness. If God wants you to be great, He will make it so.

Using the little child to illustrate, Jesus said you must not cause one of these little ones to stumble; don’t cause someone/anyone to sin. Having a millstone around your neck and then being thrown into the sea (a common Roman punishment) accentuates the seriousness of Jesus’ words. If your own hand causes you to stumble, you must do the radical thing—do what is necessary to make sure you don’t continue in such a sin. Obviously, being maimed for life would be better than going to hell. Rather than self mutilation, Jesus contrasts heaven and hell by saying: *“It is better.”* Jesus’ language stresses the severity of sin.

Jesus knew that He will soon die; His suffering would be for all. His apostles continued to jockey for seats of greatness in the kingdom. True kingdom living will lead us to paths of service. Seats of esteem, proclamations of our own self-worth, and shutting out those who really belong in the kingdom will bring us to that unenviable end—eternal punishment. Do you really want to think about the fires of hell? I don’t imagine the disciples of Jesus wanted to either.

Randy Harshbarger

Do Feed Your Conscience!

If you’ve ever been on Face Book you’ve probably seen your share of funny memes with a sobering message. I like the one with a silver haired lady explaining ‘books’ to her grandson, “It’s how we fed new software into our brains!” Isn’t that the truth?

For the past two weeks we have looked at some things in relation to the Christian’s Conscience, such as Don’t Follow or Don’t Violate your conscience. Those are important but if you want your conscience to work as designed then you simply must feed it properly. Any living thing will die if it is not given proper nourishment

or, to stick with the meme cited above: It has to be properly programmed.

We do this by reading God's Word, the Bible. The longest chapter in the Bible is the **119th Psalm** and every one of its 176 verses glorifies the Bible. He describes it in this manner, *"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."* (**103-105**) Paul told the **Romans in 12:2**, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* What Paul is referring to is the reprogramming of our conscience. He also alludes to this in **Philippians 4:8** *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

Feed Your Conscience!

Cleveland Reddinger

The Word of the Cross

Bubba Garner

Offended by Jesus? That seems incredible to us. Yet, there have always been those who found Him and His teaching offensive: that there is only one way (**John 14:6**) in a world that preaches tolerance; that this way would be narrow (**Mat. 7:13-14**), restrictive to the few who find it; that the way would involve surrender and submission to a higher authority instead of freedom to go your own way. That pushes some away.

But many are also offended by Christianity because it involves going the way of the cross. It is a way that includes suffering and death. Not just for Jesus, but for any who wish to come after Him (**Mat. 16:24**).

The cross was Paul's unifying message in **1 Cor. 1**. In a church where the members were claiming to be of Paul, Cephas, Apollos, and Christ, he asked, *"Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he"* (**1 Cor. 1:13**)? It was in fact the cross of Christ that reconciled both Jew and Gentile to God (**Eph. 2:16**). What should be our unifying message in a world of division and chaos? What word will draw people to the Lord? The word of the cross.

We must preach the cross. *"We preach Christ crucified"* (**1 Cor. 1:23**). This was the message that was preached by the apostles as they went into all the world (**Acts 2:22-24; Acts 3:13-15; Acts 4:8-12; Acts 10:38-43**). Even when it became apparent that the word of the cross was foolishness to some and offensive to others, still Paul said with all boldness, *"We preach Christ crucified."*

In today's world there is this insatiable desire for

something "new." People think we need something different, something more modern, something less controversial. The prevailing thought seems to be, "What was preached in the 1st Century doesn't address the needs of people in the 21st Century." But it is still the cross that tells us about the nature of sin and its consequences. It is still the cross that shows us the love and mercy and forgiveness of God. It is still the cross that reminds us of our responsibility to give our life as a living sacrifice. We cannot say we "preach the gospel" if we do not preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

We must preach the cross as the power of God. *"For indeed Jews ask for signs"* (**1 Cor. 1:22**). There were occasions when they came to Jesus seeking a sign (**Mark 8:11**) and even demanding a sign (**Luke 11:16**). In **John 6:30-31**, it was obvious that they were looking for a Messiah to come in the power of Moses or Elijah and perform some mighty work. They wanted to see something in the likeness of manna from heaven, and they completely missed the Bread of Life and His saving death.

The cross is to some *"a stumbling block"* (**1 Cor. 1:23**). The Greek word "stumbling block" (skandalon) is where we get the word "scandal." That's what the cross was to the Jews: a scandal. They couldn't imagine a suffering Savior, that the Son of God would be a man of sorrows. The Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote that "crucifixion was the most wretched of all ways of dying." But the power of God is seen in that He was able to turn this seeming defeat into stunning victory. The gates of Hades could not overpower His Son or His plan. We need not be ashamed of the word of the cross. It is the power of God for salvation (**Romans 1:16**).

We must preach the cross as the wisdom of God. To the Gentiles, the cross was *"foolishness"* (**1 Cor. 1:23**). "Why would a "god" become a man? How could a woman be with child of the Holy Spirit? An immaculate conception? Foolishness!" The Greeks *"search for wisdom"* (**1 Cor. 1:22**). They had Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. They had education and intellectualism. They could explain anything. Except the wisdom of God. Paul wrote that he did not come to Corinth with *"superiority of speech or of wisdom"* (**1 Cor. 2:1**). He did not come to impress them with his own understanding or worldly wisdom. He rested on the wisdom of God as seen in the cross of Christ. As the hymn Wonderful, Merciful Savior asks, "Who would have thought that a Lamb could rescue the souls of men?" But this plan was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world. His wisdom worked it out.

"May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (**Gal. 6:4**). The best way to do that is to preach the cross as the power and wisdom of God. Anything less is offensive to the Lord. ~via **Southside Bulletin; Pasadena, Texas; Taken from the Market Street Messenger**

Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer

Elders Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer

Deacons:

Bill Miller

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Casey Dent

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NEWS AND NOTES:

SICK IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

JAN PATRICK, STEPHEN KIMKER,
STEVE WIMP, LINDIA JACKSON
AND THE MOTHER OF ALMA
BAUMGARTNER

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS:
CHRISTIAN PARENTING PART 2 -
RON PECK TEACHER

WEDNESDAY BIBLE CLASS:
ANGELS AND DEMONS
JIM STAUFFER TEACHER

SUNDAY MORNING SERMON:
GREED



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10